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c o n t e n t



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MAGAZINE

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Collaborators:
Bardhylka Kospiri
Fatos Baxhaku
Marita Flagler
Brikena Shllaku
Elda Spaho
Narbis Ballhysa

Entila Zyba
The Albanian Association of
the Blind

Design
Orest Muça

ADD: Str "Mujo Ulqinaku"
No.26 Tiranë
Tel.Fax: ++355 4 266892
E-mail: adrf@icc.al.eu.org
www.adrf.org.al

Confused by the bewildered

By Fatos BAXHAKU

Iron and concrete has not prevailed everywhere. The long shadows of skyscrapers have not wiped out every single piece of the old Albania. In one of the quiet towns of Middle Albania there should have remained an old style fence or a piece of dark brown pavement. In one of these corners, which seems that time could not throw a glance at, an old friend of ours is passing the days in loneliness. His strong body, his proud appearance, well-built limbs, make us think that a long time ago, about a couple of decades ago the man of our story was a funny guy, a man deep in love with life and work. Always in motion, his hobbies were the nature and fishing. As it always happens in great loves, somebody had to pay for that. But payment in this case was really cruel. Our character had ignored the bloody craziness of '97, but the evil usually gets its target. While fishing carelessly at the river bank, a volley of machine-gun shot his leg through.

Happy days were over for the man of our story.

Now, our friend keeps well and with dignity in his small workshop in the forgotten alley.

A lot of things have changed since he started to move on his wooden amputation. Not many people show up at his door anymore, some voice which were warm and friendly long ago come to his mind only during the quietness of the night, when he recalls the past.

Who knows why the noble face (look) of our friend suddenly showed up in a hot day of this pre-election situation. Perhaps it has nothing to do with it, perhaps it has a lot, who really knows... But while sipping our coffee in silence, promises, cursing, overwhelming enthusiasm and banderoles were coming and going from the TV screen in front of us, our character shrank in his deaf silence.

By the end when we were about to leave the place to go somewhere else, somewhere where it is noisier and hot with elections, the faint voice of our friend was heard, as if he was talking to himself rather than us: "Ah, pal, the evil is so deep inside us, so it seems that all these are just noise, everything elections, organizations, long meetings. We have forgotten each other and there it is where the worst of the worst starts. This forgetfulness has shocked us all, apart from having one or two legs...". While talking he was looking somewhere, far in the distance, in the dark edges of his badly lightened workshop as if he wanted to forget us only for a few moments, despite his never-ending kindness. May he experience only for a few moments what we, the ordinary two-legged creatures, do. And it was only then when we were reminded of our own bewilderment, which is so deep as we can convey that to those whom were deeply hurt by the fortune. And this bewilderment would seem to them simply like a kids' game.

On 7 January 2005, the Council of Ministers, in the decision no.8, approved the National Strategy on People with Disability. It marked the completion of the first phase of the process undertaken by the Grouping of the NGO-s established with the support of ADRF to encourage the government to include disability issues in its agenda through developing and approving a complete framework of policies and measures for its implementation, stipulating timelines, stakeholders and the required budget for its implementation.

This Strategy laid the foundations for a continuous process and dynamics, which would enable the complete participation of people with disability in society, aiming at developing a social state which provides equal opportunities.

The Strategy will serve as an instrument to contribute to the

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change of attitudes of individuals, organisations and state institutions to enable social equality for people with disability.

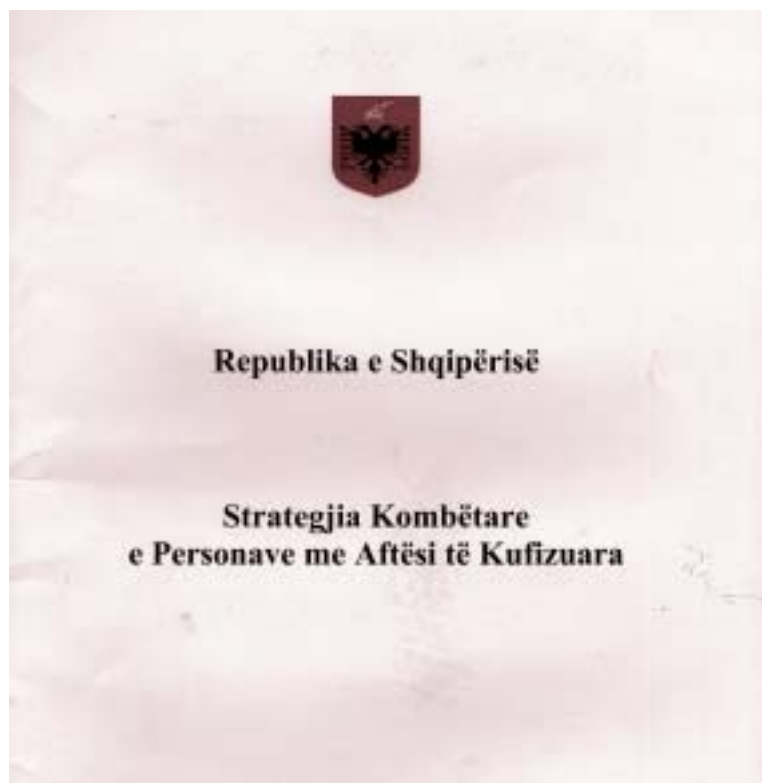
This process should go further with the implementation, which requires a serious commitment from all the actors as defined in this Strategy and co-operation and constant dialogue between the institutions and the organisations on disability.

ADRF, in its programmes, has

always promoted the accessibility and equal opportunities in all the fields – health service, rehabilitation, social service, education, employment, environment accessibility, access to transport, non-discriminative legislation, etc., which mean multi-sectors, (multi-folded) policies, planning and monitoring co-ordinated by all the stakeholders.

The development of the National Strategy on People with Disability is based on the mainstreaming policies. Therefore, ADRF aims at undertaking the next step, i.e. towards a multidimensional monitoring through encouraging the implementation of the commitments and timelines by all the stakeholders. In order to achieve this, ADRF in various workshops on the Strategy to be organised at regional level with the participation of representatives from the responsible structures for the Disability and from the Organisations on Disability, will encourage discussions on the Strategy and develop the dialogue, which has to concentrate thereafter in planning, co-ordination and constant follow-up of the implementation of the NSPD (National Strategy on People with Disability).

ADRF aims at encouraging and raising the awareness of civil society and its participation in the process of monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy on People with Disability. ADRF also intends to encourage discussions among all the stakeholders to ensure a constant review and improvement of the NSPD.





Vodafone funds 30 wheel-chairs

On the 3rd of March 2005, Albanian Disability Rights Foundation organised a meeting between the donor – VODAFONE – Albania and the beneficiaries of the mobility units produced “Miresia” workshop. It was one of the routine activities organised by ADRF to present donors’ contribution to support people with disability in need of mobility means.

VODAFONE – Foundation through VODAFONE – Albania has, over this year, enabled the production of 30 wheel-chairs for people with disability in Tirana and Lac regions.

The identification of the needs for people with disability in need of mobility means is carried out by regional social welfare and social security offices. A study carried out in 6 regions showed

VODAFONE Company, a sustainable support for the provision of the people with disability with wheel-chairs.

that the number of people with disability in need of wheel-chairs is over 1000.

According to the UN Standard Rules on the Equality of Opportunities to People with Disability, the provision of people with disability with mobility means is one of their fundamental rights and it has its direct impact on their integration in society. ADRF has approached successful private and state-run businesses in our country to contribute to financial support for the production of mobility means.

VODAFONE – Albania is the first company in Albania, which gave its contribution to subsidy people with

disability in need of mobility means demonstrating the best practice of successful partnership established between the business and the Albanian NGOs offering social services for people in need.

VODAFONE support, the second of this kind, to produce mobility means has ensured the sustainability of one of the tangible projects in the disability area in Albania, i.e. the production of the mobility means for people with disability in need of them and other supportive services for them.

“Miresia” workshop was established by ADRF in January 1996 and for almost 8 years now is the first and the only existing service for the production and the distribution of wheel-chairs and other accessories for people with disability in Albania. “Miresia” workshop is also one of the examples of the integration of people with disability in the social life through employment.

This project with direct impact on the integration of people with disability has enabled the provision of over 1600 people with disability with mobility means along with raising the awareness of people with disability, their families and communities regarding the rights of people with disability.

VODAFONE through this contribution ensures a positive development towards satisfying the needs of an increasing number of people with disability in need of mobility means, enabling the encouragement of development programmes, which promote the right of the people with disability in Albania and has a direct impact on the quality of their lives.

By Dr. Marita FLAGLER

Mainstreaming education, which aims at providing education to all the children in compliance with their age and their special needs in the common school premises, is a contemporary international approach, which is recognised as the most appropriate approach to fulfil the right to education, as a fundamental right of every child “without any discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his/her parent’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, Article 2).

Mainstreaming education at the same time implies that the children with special needs, who used to attend special educational centres, should attend public schools; and the development of curricula and teaching pedagogical approaches should meet the needs of all of the pupils in the class.

Over the last decade in Albania, efforts have been made to complete the legal framework, which ensures the right of children with disability to receive education equal to their peers. In addition, efforts have also been made to introduce models/practices of integration and mainstreaming of children with special needs in various regions of the country. In order to measure the efficiency of the legal framework on encouraging and implementing mainstreaming education and



Survey: Schools still closed for children with disability

make an assessment of the existing mainstreaming education practices, ADRF (Albanian Disability Rights Foundation) co-ordinated the development of a study (survey) in the regions of Elbasan (Librazhd) and Tirana during December 2004 – February 2005. This study (survey) was funded by “Save the Children” and its findings were presented at a round table organised with experts from this field.

This study was well designed

encompassing various interconnected elements. In the framework of this study, many legal documents and bylaws were taken into consideration; 25 children with disability (19 of whom attending public school classes) were observed and interviewed; 70 pupils of V – VIII grade classes, 20 parents of children with disability, 10 schoolmasters in Librazhd and 100 students of Teaching Branch at “Aleksander Xhuvani” University in Elbasan

were surveyed; 2 deans and 4 heads of departments of the same University, 8 officials from the Education Departments in Elbasan and Tirane, 6 social workers in Elbasan and Librazhd, and 6 officials from the Ministry of Education and Science were interviewed.

The findings showed that in general there is a positive atmosphere in Albania, which favours the implementation of the mainstreaming education, but the public schools do not have completely open doors for children with disability yet.

- Almost all of the persons interviewed and surveyed are aware that children with disability have the right to education just like all the children and they should receive this education in public schools.

- Existing legislation ensures this right.

- Teachers and students of Teaching Faculty have the will to work with children with disability, but they do not have the necessary didactic knowledge.

- School premises are not accessible; specialised supportive personnel or other adequate means and materials are not available.

The study also concluded that there is an ambiguity regarding the implementation of the mainstreaming education in compliance with the individual needs of the children with disability; the identification of the beneficiaries; and the mechanisms to ensure its implementation:

- There is a legal ambiguity regarding the admission procedures, initial assessment and enrolment of children with disability in the first grade classes of public schools.

- The secondary education does not ensure the continuity for

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the integrated and mainstreaming education of children with disability.

- There are no normative acts to regulate the work for the Individual Education Programme (IEP).

- No attention or motivation in terms of such issues as the further qualifications of teachers, their workload and payment.

- The relationship between the public school system and the social and physiological services system is not specified.

- Faculties preparing teachers for the primary school and the 9-grade schooling system know a little about the Normative Provisions on the Education of Children with Disability approved in

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2002; most of the senior academic staff has an unclear understanding of the children with disability and the mainstreaming education; insufficient or no subjects on specialised education of the children with disability in the framework of mainstreaming education have been included in the curricula for the future teachers of the 9-grade schooling system.

Another significant finding was that the Ministry of Education and Science has not given the proper place to the integrated and mainstreaming education of children with disability, and it has its impact on the work of the Regional Education Departments and Schools. There are no administrative and monitoring structures, budget or reporting lines for an integrated and mainstreaming education.

- Appropriate structures at the Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Education Departments are not established yet. These structures would enable the co-ordination and development of the integration and mainstreaming education for the chil-



dren with disability.

- Public school system curricula and texts are not appropriate for the mainstreaming education.

- Legal framework does not foresee any sanction, which would serve to control the level of the enforcement of the mainstreaming education legislation.

The positive example in Librazhd demonstrates that a proper interest and motivation for the mainstreaming education shown by Regional Education Department and the local government and strengthened by a very efficient co-operation, constitute the conditions for the implementation of the mainstreaming education.

However, its successful implementation along with raising the awareness of the parents of children with disability and the awareness of other pupils at school requires financial, professional and material support, which, as proved by the experience in other countries, is enabled by legal acts and bylaws which underpin a developed strategic platform.



This study showed that the contemporary education for children with disability is just at the start. In order to institutionalise and extend the integrated and mainstreaming education nationwide, the group of specialists carrying out this study has made the recommendation of developing and publishing “policies to provide equal opportunities and make education accessible to any child”, as defined at “The National Strategy on the Development of Pre-University Education, 2004 – 2015”. These policies should specify and include very important issues as follow: (a) definition of a child with disability, (b) his/her assessment and identification, (c) education according



to the individual personal plan, (d) establishment of new professional occupations such as occupational therapist and speech therapist, (e) special education financial scheme, (ë) establishment of the responsible administrative structures, (f) establishment of an inspection, monitoring system on the child's progress, (g) participation of parents in the process, (gj) qualification of the teachers and school administrative officials as well as of the new teachers, (h) a scientific research on the integrated specialised education and dissemination of the findings, etc.

These policies should be supported by the sub-objectives to achieve the objective of “Ensuring the best possible education for people with disability” defined at the National Strategy on the People with Disability (Decision of Council of Ministers No.08, dated 07.01.2005).

In addition, the working group recommended that this work on developing policies should be preceded by a feasibility study on the capacity and needs of the country to ensure the right of the children with disability to optimal education. This should be carried out by a working group, which should be composed of the best specialists in country, who have the contemporary international knowledge and the national experience in providing education to children with disability.

